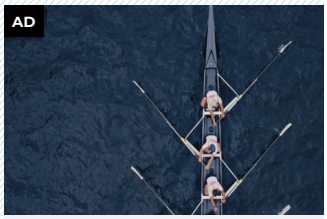
DC

Teenage girls come together to overcome obstacles

Teenage girls in Northeast, D.C. are overcoming their obstacles, simply by coming together and talking. It's all part of a program called "H.E.R. Story," standing for Helping Empower Regalness, which looks to give these girls an outlet.



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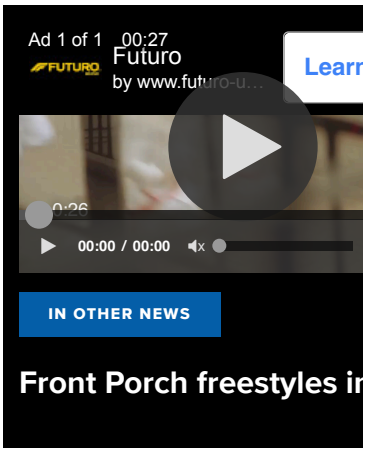

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Tia Haskins is just 16-years-old, but she said she's had to grow up pretty quickly, due to what she's seen in her Ward 8 neighborhood.

"Recently we've had a lot of shootings back to back," she said. "People getting killed. A pregnant lady got stabbed in an alley... It's a possibility I could lose my life stepping out of my home."

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For the most part, Haskins said she tries to leave the troubles at home, but she said it's at time difficult to concentrate at school.

"It's like it follows me," she said. "Because that negative energy from there, it makes me have a bad attitude when I come to school that way."

But Haskins has found help in a perhaps surprising place - her peers.

H.E.R. Story:

Haskins is one of many students at the Phelps A.C.E High School in Northeast that have found their voice through a program called "H.E.R. Story," which stands for "Helping Empower Regalness." Once a week, the teenage girls gather at the school to talk about the good and the bad in their lives.

During every meeting, the girls will share a "rose," and a "thorn," referring to a good and a bad thing that had happened to them that week.

"I'm starting to open up more instead of keeping it all inside," said one teenager. "I'm starting to talk to people more."

"There's a lot of negativity that's trying to surround me," said another.

"I've been having a lot of self-doubt," said another teen. "And it holds me back."

The program was brought to the school by Shayla Stafford, an instructor at the school. She said it's all about giving the girls a break from any problems they may be facing at home or in their communities.

"They really need a safe space just to be girls," she said. "And they need a place where they can get exposure and be connected with folks that really genuinely care about their future."

Jasmine Gibson is 18 years old, and said the program was especially helpful when she was younger.

"My mom - she used to drink," she said. "She was an alcoholic. I used to know that I could come to this meeting, and just talk about it. And I won't feel like somebody is judging me... It was like my escape."

The program is about more than just the meetings. The girls are also paired up with a female mentor in the community. If you want to mentor, you can visit the program's website at http://www.remixeducation.org/.

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